

GOAC3 Presents Options for Seldovia

by Tamara Blodgett

Community Fishing Quota provides jobs and more...

The non-profit Gulf of Alaska Coastal Communities Coalition (GOAC3) visits small, coastal communities with populations between 20-1500 people to educate/ clarify and assist them on how to obtain Halibut and Sable Fish quota shares via grants and other resources to eligible fisherman and boats. The goal or “target” of the GOAC3 is to facilitate small boats with a 8-12 thousand pound holding capacity to fish up to 50,000 pounds maximum per vessel of Halibut & Sable Fish. Vessels individually or collectively cannot fish more than 50 thousand pounds of either species of IFQ if it fishes for any amount of Community Quota Entity (CQE).

Keeping IFQ in Seldovia and other villages...

An attendance of 17 souls, with 2 from Port Graham and 1 from Nanwalek spoke to the desire for local villages to keep IFQ's while also providing a future livelihood to the next generation(s). Some of the facts that were presented at Tuesday's meeting were poverty rates are one third higher in these coastal areas than in the rest of Alaska . In the last decade, 23 of these communities have had a decline in population, with an average decrease of 30% in populations of 250 or less (Seldovia stands at 284). Lastly, in the first 3 years of IFQ, almost 25% of the available Halibut Quota Share had transferred from Alaska 's small communities and the number of rural residents holding quota share declined by 33%. Without quotas, young adults can not make fishing a valid career choice. Future generations will be unable to sustain themselves in small villages and the trend will be families moving away, instead of moving in due to lack of work.

A terrific solution with a stumbling block...

The biggest challenge facing the CQE would be availability of a low interest loan. If a loan or grant could be obtained, it would allow people wishing to enter the IFQ program opportunity and in eventuality, own their own quota. Of significant note, currently, Seldovia is eligible for 7 interim Halibut Charter Permits through the CQE. The GOAC3 does act as a liaison to the National Marine Fisheries amongst other groups.

Thinking for the present and the future...

Seldovia has progressively become forward thinking and has displayed a desire to think for the future first. Seldovia is very concerned about growth, families and jobs in our community. CQE is not *the* answer, but it is certainly *one* of the answers. There are families here that fish, and generations that wish to continue this tradition or begin one. Let's make that a reality. Become involved and familiar with the CQE IFQ's and see what you can do to be proactive for our mutual future. Please check out their website at www.goac3.org/ for more information.